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AUTHOR Tate, Charles E.
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ABSTRACT

Cable television has tremendous potential for human, social, and community development, but this cannot be achieved without planning, in which the needs of the community must be paramount. Both the politics of education and the quality of the educational process must be considered before suggesting futures for cable technology. A significant impact can be made on the politics of education if cable technology is used creatively and constructively to improve the educational process. Because existing educational institutions have neither credibility nor accountability in many communities, especially among minorities, the establishment of community controlled institutions is essential in planning for the development of a community level cable television educational system. These institutions should have a research, development, and demonstration function. Though high, the costs involved seem reasonable and justifiable considering the potential of cable technology and the inferior results so far achieved by educational institutions serving minority groups. The depth of the social crisis requires new concepts and new directions for which cable technology provides a unique and historical opportunity. (SA)

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"CATV: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION"

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Charles E. Tate
Executive Director
Cablecommunications Resource Center
1900 L Street, N. W., Suite 205
Washington, D. C. 20036

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The word "revolution" is tossed around so casually these days that it is becoming very difficult to convey a precise meaning from its use.

Nevertheless, I can find no better term to define and describe the scope of the social changes caused by television. The revolution caused by television is world-wide in scope -- and it is continuing. No one can predict where it is taking us or where it will leave us.

Television is a totally pervasive medium. Every household in the country has one; 60 percent of the households have two or more; and over 60 percent have color sets. We depend on it for news, information, and entertainment. It is a salesman, a babysitter, a teacher, and a political, moral and spiritual force. It has erased and overturned old life styles, philosophies, social behavior, and political boundaries.

In most households, the television set is turned on and tuned in 6 hours per day. Black families and poor families watch 7-1/2 hours per day. Based on these viewing patterns, we will spend almost one-third of our lives experiencing some form of television programming.

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It has unquestionably caused a serious imbalance in the distribution of powers between the three branches of the federal government. Only the president has continuous and unfettered access to the national television medium.-----This means that the Executive Branch of the government can exclusively present its programs, ideas, and philosophies to the 80 million television homes in the country.

These changes are revolutionary. And it has taken less than three decades to accomplish them.

Yet, we are still on the threshhold. Cable television, satellite television, laser television, computer television and fiber optic television are rapidly emerging television technologies that are expected to reach the consumer market before 1984.

So, while this conference has been organized to investigate and explore the potential uses of cable television in the field of adult education, we should not ignore the larger, historic, and revolutionary context within which that exploration is being conducted. This could be our best, and perhaps, our final opportunity to control, shape, and direct the powerful forces that television has unleashed.

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Therefore, I think that it is not only important that this conference is being held. I think that it is imperative.

While it is unfortunate for the cable television industry that economic difficulties have slowed the rate of construction and development of urban cable systems, it is fortuitous for the society as a whole. We need time to carefully plan and control the development process. I believe that cable television has tremendous potential for human, social, and community development. But I think that these objectives cannot be achieved without planning. Further, we cannot rely on the legendary "competitive forces in the market place" to stimulate or produce the quality of planning required. Broad segments and sectors of the society should be involved. Considerations beyond the profitability of a particular service to cable operators and private investors should influence the selection, design, and delivery of education, health, and other vital services to communities. The needs of the community should be paramount -- rather than the rate of return on investment. Communities and local governments make a serious mistake when they delegate these

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planning functions to cable operators. The substantive issue is what can cable technology do for the community -- rather than what can the community get the cable operator to do.

I just returned from the NCTA convention in Chicago where I was a co-panelist with Newton Minow in a symposium on the future of cable. Mr. Minow is the former chairman of the FCC who referred to television programming as a "vast wasteland." In discussing the issue of new program services for cable, Mr. Minow suggested that the public sector may have to take the lead in planning, developing, and capitalizing certain new program services. He pointed out that there would be no public television service today unless the government had developed and financed it.

I support that view. Public sector participation in developing new services would enhance rather than diminish private sector participation. In the short term, most of the desirable new services such as adult education services, will not be developed at all without a strong public constituency that is willing to lobby for the research and development dollars required -- from

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government, industry, and foundations.

Against that philosophical and political background, I'd like to comment briefly on a few issues directly related to your conference agenda.

In a recent report entitled "The Fourth Revolution, Instructional Technology in Higher Education," the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education listed cable television first among new technologies that hold out the greatest prospects for higher education uses. The National Education Association and the NCTA, along with a host of other educational associations and media organizations share this vew -- not just in terms of higher education -- but all levels of education.

The Federal Communications Commission demonstrated their support of this position by adopting the requirement that all new urban cable systems must set aside a channel for use by educational authorities. This requirement is set forth in the FCC rules regulating cable television that went into effect on March 31, 1972.

It is difficult to restrain your enthusiasm when you contemplate the potential of cable technology as a delivery system for educational services.

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Cable will provide a direct link between the producers of educational services and the home, the school, the office, the plant, and other places of work and leisure. Furthermore, cable systems will be able to provide those services in video, audio, and digital mode or a combination of these modes. The most exciting prospect, however, is the capability of cable technology to provide an interactive mode or feedback response mode between producers and users. Although present hardware limit the interactive response mode to simple digital data, there is optimism that video response systems will be available within this decade.

Confronted with the capabilities of cable technology, a virtually unlimited number of applications in the field of adult education fill the mind.

Literacy programs, medical training for professionals and paraprofessionals, language skills, enrichment and cultural programs, refresher courses, remedial courses, technical and vocational training, and electronic correspondence courses in every discipline and specialty are technologically feasible.

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Speculation about the possible educational applications of cable technology is an interesting pastime and it doesn't cost much. Implementation of speculative ideas about educational applications of cable technology will involve substantial costs -- including opportunity and social costs. This was true in the case of the automobile, the airplane, and commercial television -- and it will also be true for cable television. The costs of traffic congestion, forest fires, bank robberies, highway fatalities, noise and pollution are very real social costs associated with the development of the internal combustion engine.

Technological advance also produces broad social and societal effects. The economic decline of the central cities, the shift in the location of skilled jobs, and the loss of occupations in the railroad industry can also be linked to the development of the internal combustion engine.

Of course, there are offsetting factors and positive social gains that also flow out of technological advancement. For example, the development of mass production techniques for cars provided an outlet for displaced Southern Black labor.

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The impact of cable television technology on education generally and adult education specifically depends on many variables. As with other technologies, there is no precise formula or valid criteria to use to predict the source, shape, structure or character of the impact. There are several factors, however, that we can examine. Over the past decade, the entire system of education has been the focal point of political activism. Reformists, radicals, moderates, conservatives, reactionaries and anarchists have centered their attention on education and educational institutions.

The federal and state courts have been especially active in the field of education. The U. S. Supreme Court decision in 1954 declaring separate school systems for Blacks and whites within the same school district unconstitutional; more recent decisions by lower federal courts requiring racial balance in public schools in metropolitan areas; and the Serrano Preist decision declaring unequal per pupil expenditures between school districts within the State of California unconstitutional -- individually and collectively, these decisions are the most important and far-reaching social policies adopted since the Reconstruction.

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And there are other dimensions to the social crisis in America that take shape and form around educational issues. Unionization of white collar professionals and other service workers is being advanced most effectively through teachers unions and teachers strikes against public school systems. The revolt is widespread and effective in the defeat of school bond levies.

Next to the police, educational institutions are viewed by most Blacks as instruments of repression and genocide. In the May 1972 issue of the Harvard Educational Review -- Dr. Arthur Thomas -- a dynamic, young Black educator from Dayton, Ohio commented:

> "The school is a certified agent of oppression. There are many similarities between urban schools that I've been associated with and Attica. At Attica they shot people down physically; in the public schools they shoot children down psychologically. The result is the same, death."

This view is enlarged upon by Dr. James Turner -- director of African Studies at Cornell University.

> "In the Black community, one of the most blatant forms of oppression is the irrelevant and destructive educational experiences of its youth -- from elementary to junior and senior

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high schools and finally in colleges and universities. There is a denial of the legitimacy of cultural expression and social facility among Black people."

("Black Studies and a Black Philosophy on Education" by James Turner, Imani Magazine, August-September, 1971).

Control of police and schools in their communities are priority items on the Black political agenda.

Threatened with the loss of control by the federal court decisions, whites who have traditionally controlled schools in their communities are organizing to retain control and exclusiveness.

A result of all of these activities is that the field of education has become a political battleground and educational institutions are under seige. Whites are arrayed against Blacks, the suburbs against the cities, students against administrators, and unions against school boards.

How the system of education responds to the current crisis will be an important factor in determining the impact of cable and other technology. Very few innovative and creative approaches have emerged thus far. "Quality"

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education and "equality" of educational opportunities are mere slogans -- devoid of content and lacking political definition.

Another pertinent factor that we can examine is the educational process itself. Several social analysts have studied the issue of the impact of electronic media on the educational process. The report of the Sloan Commission on Cable Communications[4.] suggests that cable television can be readily and effectively used in the field of continuing education with minor disruptive effects./ (I don't think that the level of disruption should be a controlling factor.) On the other hand the Commission foresaw the potential for enormous disruptive impact in the field of formal education. In commenting on the negligible impact that broadcast radio and television have had on the system of education, the Commission advised:

> "It appears at first sight absurd that formal education, itself primarily a communications process, should be so indifferent to the provision of powerful new tools of communication. But it is conceivable that it is precisely the power of the new tools, and in particular the power of television, that makes them appear incompatible with the existing educational system.

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> ---Despite the record of the past, the Commission is convinced that cable television has a role in education, and perhaps a role of surpassing importance. ---But the Commission believes also that a study of the significance of cable television (and closed circuit television) in education must be undertaken as part of the study of the educational process as a whole. --- It may well be that in light of the new tool, every major aspect of the system requires significant change---."[5.]

A comprehensive study of the educational process was recently completed by Charles Silberman. His findings are reported in "Crisis In the Classroom--The Remaking of American Education."[6.] Silberman's study did not deal extensively with educational technology or with the educational uses of television. He did critique past and contemporary efforts involving the use of computers and television in instruction. His findings and conclusions support the position taken by the Sloan Commission. Silberman argues that proponents and users of television for instruction have little understanding of the nature of the medium -- and generally view it as simply a "pipeline" for the transmission of educational materials. According to Silberman

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"To see television this way is to guarantee failure; no medium -- neither the book nor the lecture nor the seminar nor the film nor the drama -- is 'only' a pipeline. ---At the very least, each medium makes demands and imposes limitations; and it has its own grammar that requires the material to be altered to fit the medium."

The Silberman study does deal extensively and definitely with the educational process. Education, according to Silberman is a continuous process that involves training, schooling, and all of the experiences available that one is exposed to. He concludes that the quality of the educational experiences available to many groups and individuals in the society is so poor that it is dehumanizing.

Considering these two sets of factors -- the politics of education and the quality of the educational process in America today -- we can suggest some futures for cable technology in the field of adult education.

First, cable technology can have a significant impact on the politics of education if it is creatively and constructively used to improve and enrich

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the educational process in the major cities. These are the cities with the smallest number of options in terms of education -- the largest and most densely populated communities -- and the cities where the failures and inadequacies of the existing system of education have an immediate and direct impact on the quality of life.

Cable television operators are attracted to these cities because of the large, concentrated population base -- and the high penetration of television sets within each household.

While the rate of urban cable development has dropped, there is little doubt that cable systems will be built in the major cities in the near future --barring a full scale depression. It is also probable that these cable systems will be high capacity -- 40 channels or more -- have two-way signal transmission capability -- and channel space dedicated to education.

Hence, the moment these systems are turned on -- a new system and process of education will become available to those cities. How can these cable systems -- these new educational plants be used to influence the politics

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of education? If the proper planning is conducted, a decentralized, community-controlled system of education can be developed. A system that can be much more responsive to the diverse educational needs and preferences of the community than the existing system in terms of the variety and the content of courses.

The proper planning for the development of a community level cable television educational system will require the establishment of new community-controlled institutions, especially in Black and Brown communities. The existing educational institutions have neither credibility nor accountability to these groups. A recent study of Adult Basic Education conducted by the School of Education and Division for Continuing Education, at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, indicate why these community groups feel this way.

Among the findings of the study is the following data:

1) Although the participants in adult education are often drop-outs from the regular institutional education system in the United States, adult basic education is attached to and heavily influenced by this system.

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2) Adult basic education programs draw their administrative and instructional staff from the ranks of traditional public school systems, while their students are not of that system and indeed, may well be the rejects of it.

3) Most of the administrators are from the majority community and receive their formal training in majority institutions. Therefore, they are often not prepared to cope with adults with diverse cultural behaviors, or with non-traditional educational needs.

4) Adult education statistics show that 64 percent of adult education administrators are white, while 68 percent of the students are non-white. Of these 42 percent are black. Also, 63 percent of the students in adult education are females, whereas 86 percent of the administrators are male.

5) A majority of students in adult basic education are members of minority groups -- either racial, ethnic or socio-economic. However, decisions are consistently being made by local, state and regional administrators who are primarily white, middle-class males.

The importance of these factors of credibility and accountability has been recognized by government in other areas -- such as social services, health services, and urban redevelopment. The quest of minorities for similar control over the schools has been consistently thwarted.

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The kind of community-controlled institutions that should be established to exploit the educational potential of cable should be a research, development, and demonstration organization. Its primary functions should be to determine how cable television and related media can be used to improve and diversify the quality of education and learning experiences available to the community; and to develop the curricula, faculty and other support systems to demonstrate the economic and technical feasibility of implementing these programs. Once feasibility is proven, developed programs could be offered by the school system, government agencies, model cities programs, and business concerns.

Financial support for course offerings can be derived from a number of sources -- including public and private employers, franchise fees, tuition, federal and state funds, and private grants and donations. The Federal Communications Commission has prescribed that franchise fees on cable revenues be limited to three percent of gross revenue -- with the exception that higher fees -- up to five percent of gross revenue -- may be authorized upon justification.

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Tuition and course fees can be charged. For example, arrangements can be made with employers, state welfare agencies, vocational rehabilitation agencies and similar programs to directly subsidize education and training for their employees and clients. In addition, model cities programs, legal service programs, health centers and other federally-funded groups should budget for the production and distribution of educational program materials.

Typically, each region of the country with a Black or Brown population over 100,000 should have a research and development organization to coordinate the planning, design, demonstration and implementation of educational programs for cable television delivery. According to recent census data, 26 cities in the country have Black populations in excess of 100,000.

It is difficult to estimate the capital requirements for these regional research and development centers because there is no data on the quantity and availability of existing local facilities. Most communities have some media capability. The primary costs would involve the staff --

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and ideally a modern, two-way cable system or a closed circuit television system for demonstrations. Assuming that the delivery systems are available, start-up costs for the regional R&D centers could be held to about $1 million for each center -- a total outlay of approximately $5 million. Federal, state and local governments should provide these funds. Over a 5 year period the total costs would be $25 million.

I think that $25 million is a reasonable and justifiable investment considering the potential of cable technology and the inferior results now achieved by educational institutions serving these groups.

This investment compares favorably with the level of capitalization of community development corporations by the Office of Economic Opportunity. I consider education to be equal in importance to business development in the central cities.

The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education has recommended that the federal government invest $100 million in 1973 for research and development programs to demonstrate the educational utilization of cable, video cassettes and related media. The Commission further

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suggests increasing amounts each year until they reach a sum equal to one percent of the total national expenditures for higher education by 1980. This program should be expanded to include the capitalization of regional centers for Black and Brown communities of 100,000 or more.

If this regional R&D Center concept is implemented, it could defuse the conflict-laden politics that now pervade and surround the field of education. These Centers would enable educationally disadvantaged communities to address some of their most pressing problems -- such as reading achievement, math, languages, and ethnic studies; as well as literacy, remedial education and vocational training.

It is important that the Centers be controlled by the community and not by the existing educational apparatus. The community has no confidence in the commitment or capacity of the existing system to provide a quality education and learning experiences to them or to their children. Community control of the learning centers could restore their conficence in the educational process and introduce a creative and dynamic force into the total educational system.

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Naturally, there will be resistance to the concept of minority controlled research and development institutions determining the educational uses of cable technology and related media.

But the depth of the social crisis requires new concepts and new directions. Cable technology provides a unique and historical opportunity to chart a new course.

We must not view cable television as simply a new "pipeline" to carry old goods to the market place. The way the medium is used should convey the message that new ideas, new concepts, and new institutions that are more humane and more responsive can and will be developed.